THE CATHOLIC Spirit

Mary is a Sign of Hope, Consolation for the World, Pope Says

Colleen Rowan photo

A statue of Our Lady that stands outside of Mater Dolorosa Parish in Paden City is shown in 2024.

By Junno Arocho Esteves

(OSV News) — For the many living through war, displacement and devastating natural disasters, Mary remains a source of hope and maternal consolation, Pope Leo XIV said.

After praying the Angelus prayer on the Feast of the

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St. Brendan Parish Celebrates Historic Mortgage Payoff after 27 Years

By Dan Kelly and Pat Mayes

ELKINS — After nearly three decades of sacrifice, prayer and steady generosity, St. Brendan Catholic Church has paid off its mortgage, marking a milestone parish leaders say will open the door to new possibilities for ministry and service.

The celebration came on Aug. 9th at the close of the 11 a.m. Mass, when parishioners learned the long-awaited news: the debt was gone. Moments later, members of the church family gathered outside in the plaza, cheering as the mortgage was ceremonially burned in a dramatic symbol of freedom and gratitude.

"Because of the generous and giving hearts of our parish and community, we will be financially stable for many years to come," said newly appointed pastor Father Babu Joseph Elamturuthil.

St. Brendan Catholic Church has been part of the Elkins community for more than 129 years. The parish first built a wooden church in 1897 and later replaced it in 1928 with a stone church at the site now occupied by the Randolph County Arts Center.

In September 1995, Father William Anderson and parishioners broke ground on a larger, more modern church off the Glenmore Loop, near

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Linda Skidmore photo

At St. Brendan Parish in Elkins, Ty Burgess and Deacon Aaron Talbott place the parish's mortgage in the flames in front of the church.

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To Report Suspected Cases of Sexual Abuse of Children: The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston encourages reporting to civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. We also encourage utilizing www.reportbishopabuse.org to make a report about any bishop in the U.S. If you have reason to believe that a bishop has engaged in sexual misconduct or has interfered with an investigation into sexual misconduct, please contact civil authorities in the applicable jurisdiction and visit www.reportbishopabuse.org. **To Report to Civil Authorities: Contact your local law enforcement:** numbers will vary based on your location. If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 911. To confidentially report any incidence of suspected child abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse, contact the West Virginia Bureau for Children and Families' Child Protective Services by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 800.352.6513. You may report anonymously to this hotline if you prefer. **To Report to Diocesan Authorities:** The diocese encourages reporting to the appropriate civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. The diocese also encourages reporting to the appropriate church authorities. To report suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, contact one of the following designees at 1.888.434.6237 or 304.233.0880: Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Mr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; or Sr. Martha Gomez, ext. 264. You may also call the Diocese's Office of Safe Environment at 304.230.1504 or the Diocese's sexual abuse hotline at 833.230.5656. Additional methods of reporting are available at www.dwc.org, under "Accountability." Complaint forms are available online at www.dwc.org, click "Diocese" on the menu bar, then "Offices," then "Safe Environment", then "Download Files and Forms." The form is titled "Complaint Form for Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor." The form may be returned via U.S. mail to: Office of Safe Environment, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003. **To Report to the Diocese's Victim Assistance Coordinator:** call Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, at 304.559.6742. The Diocese partners with Navex Global to offer EthicsPoint to report other concerns such as suspected financial, professional, and personal misconduct of a priest, deacon, religious, or lay employee of the Diocese or any Catholic parish or school in WV.EthicsPoint can be accessed via www.dwc.org, under "Accountability", then "Report Misconduct" or by calling 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint is a third-party reporting system that reports to civil authorities where applicable and Diocesan authorities, and the identity of the person reporting is protected. Links and information: WV Department of Health and Human Resources: https://dhhr.wv.gov/bss/services/Pages/Centralized-Intake-for-Abuse-and-Neglect.aspx West Virginia State Police, Crimes Against Children Unit: 304-293-6400.

The Catholic Spirit

August 21, 2026
Vol. 56, No. 35

Office: 1322 Eoff St.
Mailing: PO Box 230
Wheeling, WV 26003
(304) 232-0444

thecatholicspiritwv.org
dwc.org

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Member: Catholic Press Association, West Virginia Press Association, National Press Photographers Association, Inc.

Published every Friday by e-mail & printed 10 times a year. All issues sent to each registered Catholics free of charge. Donations to help offset production costs are welcomed. Out-of-diocese subscriptions are $25 annually. The opinions of correspondents do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The Catholic Spirit.

Submission Guidelines: news releases are articles (limited to 12,000 words) and photos are welcome. Not responsible for unsolicited material.

The Catholic Spirit's Print Schedule for 2026

2026 Print Dates:

Triumph of the Cross, Sept. 11

Month of the Rosary, Oct. 9

Advent, Nov. 20

Christmas, Dec. 18

There are 10 print editions in 2026. At left are the names of the issues and the publishing dates. Please note, the publishing dates may or may not be on feast days. Digital issues are published every Friday, delivered by e-mail to subscribers, and posted on thecatholicspiritwv.org.

Hope ...

Cont'd from Page 1

Assumption, Aug. 15, the pope invoked Mary's intercession for "those communities that are in particular need of consolation and of renewed hope."

"My thoughts go out to our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land, which is also, par excellence, the Land of Mary," the pope told pilgrims gathered outside the papal residence in Castel Gandolfo. Earlier that day, the pontiff celebrated Mass in the Pontifical Parish of St. Thomas of Villanova.

The pope's prayer for peace in the Holy Land comes at a time of uncertainty after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, which was part of a plan negotiated by U.S. President Donald Trump's Board of Peace.

Despite a ceasefire announced in October 2025, Israel has continued launching air strikes it says are aimed at dismantling Hamas.

Pope Leo also offered prayers for the people of Ukraine and Russia, "both of whom are united by their filial devotion to the Holy Mother of God, and to Christians who suffer discrimination or even persecution."

The pope's prayer for Ukraine and Russia echoed a similar appeal for peace that he made during his Sunday Angelus address Aug. 9, in which he lamented the killing of innocent civilians, including children.

Before greeting the faithful gathered outside his residence, Pope Leo said he continued "to pray for the people of Colombia" as recovery efforts are ongoing following a devastating 7.4-magnitude earthquake that struck Aug. 10.

"I stand in solidarity with these communities and with all those living in difficult circumstances, and together with them I pray: 'Holy Mary, pray for us,'" the pope said.

(Junno Arocho Esteves is an international correspondent for OSV News.)

Sexual Abuse Awareness Training: The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops requires all Dioceses/Eparchies have a Safe Environment Program for the protection of children and young people. The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's Safe Environment Program consists of the following components for persons seeking employment or to volunteer, directly or indirectly, with children: background check; receipt of the Diocese's Policy Relating to Sexual Abuse of Children; sexual abuse awareness training for adults. Training may be completed online or via live workshop. For information, go to www.dwc.org, click "Diocese", then "Offices," then "Office of Safe Environment."

Payoff ...

Cont'd from Page 1

the St. Brendan Cemetery. The new church was consecrated in October 1999 after being built at a cost of more than $2 million.

For 27 years, the parish faithfully carried a large monthly mortgage payment. That commitment helped make the church possible, but it also meant that maintenance, staffing and other needs often had to wait.

This spring, recently retired pastor Father Jim O'Connor and the church's Finance Council developed a plan to eliminate the remaining balance of approximately $200,000. With permission from the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston and encouragement from the St. Brendan church family, the "Burn the Mortgage Campaign" launched in early May.

Linda Skidmore photo

Ty Burgess (second from left) announces the payoff of St. Brendan Parish's mortgage. With her is Father Jim O'Connor (left), Wilma Leombruno, and Father Babu Joseph Elamturuthil (right).

Donations quickly began coming in, both large and small. Among them was a $40,000 gift from the West Virginia Catholic Foundation in memory of Father William Anderson, whose leadership helped bring the current church to life.

"This is a special gift to the parish," Father Babu said. "This frees us to do more of God's work for our parishioners and our community."

Proceeds from the annual St. Brendan Parish Yard Sale were added to the campaign, along with donations from parish children, helping push the effort across the finish line. On Aug. 4, the parish reached its goal and the debt balance dropped to zero.

Five days later, Ty Burgess, who spearheaded the campaign, made the announcement at Mass. The moment capped months of focused giving and years of faithful commitment, ending with cheers, applause and the unforgettable sight of a mortgage going up in flames.

Linda Skidmore photo

Parishioners cheer in front of the church as the debt is gone.

Catholic Committee of Appalachia's Annual Gathering Set for Sept. 25-27 in North Carolina

"Signs of the Times in Today's Appalachia" is the theme of the 2026 Catholic Committee of Appalachia's 56th annual gathering September 25-27. The event will be at the Blue Ridge Assembly YMCA Center in Black Mountain, NC. Topics to be discussed include Food Insecurity, Immigration, Conversations in the Spirit and Love for the Poor from Pope Leo's exhortation Dilexi Te. Brochures and information are available on CCA's website – www.ccappal.org or by contacting Mary Herr at 828-497-9498 or maryherr2017@gmail.com. Registration deadline is September 15th.

A general assembly will be held Friday evening for the opening ritual and a business meeting. Saturday morning there will be a presentation about Immigration by Pisgah Legal Services and a panel discussion on Food Insecurity. There will be free time after lunch and optional small breakout groups. After that, there is a presentation by Dan Rhodes on Love for the Poor from Pope Leo's exhortation, and Conversations in the Spirit by Sr. Mary Prinski. Two awards will be given out Saturday evening. The Peace and Justice Award will be given to an individual. The FOCIS (Federation of Communities in Service) Award will be given to an organization exemplifying commitment to Appalachia and the social and ecological concerns of the area. The gathering will conclude with Sunday morning Mass concelebrated by Bishops Michael Martin and John Stowe.

Since 1970, the Catholic Committee of Appalachia (CCA) has served Appalachia, her poor and the entire web of creation. As a membership-based organization, CCA stands in solidarity with people on social and ecological concerns. We are a grassroots, faith-based network raising a prophetic voice of justice for Appalachia and her people. CCA is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization.

For more information about CCA and the annual gathering, cost and registration, check www.ccappal.org, call 828-497-9498 or email maryherr2017@gmail.com.

"I am happy to be part of our annual diocesan Catholic Sharing Appeal because not only has our parish benefitted from the appeal, over the years, I have witnessed first hand the tremendous impact the funds from the appeal make in the lives of people in our parishes."
-Fr. Alfred Obiudu

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Informational Meeting about the Diaconate and New Formation Program to be Held

By Colleen Rowan

WHEELING—Deacon Doug Breiding and Deacon Tom McFadden are excited to announce an upcoming event in Wheeling that will offer a closer look at the diaconate. Especially now, as the diocese is currently accepting applications for a new formation program, the meeting will give men interested a chance to ask questions and to learn more about this degree of Holy Orders.

"We are inviting men interested in serving our Lord and his Church in the diaconate to attend an informational meeting about the diaconate and the upcoming new formation program," Deacon McFadden said.

The meeting will be held on Thursday, Sept. 17, at 6:30 p.m. in the Caveney Room on the main level of the parish center at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Wheeling. Individuals may enter through the main office doors.

Deacon McFadden was ordained in 2024 and is the permanent deacon at St. Vincent's. He is also involved with prison ministry and bereavement counseling.

Deacon Breiding was ordained in 2004 and serves as the permanent deacon at the Cathedral of St. Joseph and St. Alphonsus Parish in Wheeling. He is also the director of cemeteries for the diocese, director of Mount Calvary Cemetery in Wheeling, and a member of the diocese's Diaconate Executive Committee.

Deacon Doug Breiding

Deacon Tom McFadden

Both are looking forward to sharing the joys they have had as deacons and to shed light on the ministry and formation process.

"Ever since ordination, I truly feel blessed to be able to share more deeply with the people I've come across in this life's journey," Deacon Breiding said. "It's been very rewarding being able to walk with people during their triumphs and their challenges."

Deacons serve in a number of ways: assisting at liturgical functions, preaching, officiating at baptisms and marriages outside of Mass, assisting and officiating at funeral rites, adult education, youth ministry, and prison ministry, among other projects.

Unlike transitional deacons going on to the priesthood, permanent deacons may be married. They are ordained to a ministry of service, assisting the bishop and his priests in many areas, especially in the ministry of the liturgy, of the word, and of charity.

The diocese opened a new formation program this spring and applications will be accepted until Dec. 30. Classes will start in September 2027 with an expected ordination date of 2032.

For more about the informational meeting, call St. Vincent de Paul Parish office at (304) 242-0406. For more information about the diaconate and the formation process, click this link https://dwc.org/directory-listing/permanent-diaconate-formation-office-of/2275/

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A Cathedral that Teaches the Faith

A Visit to the Cathedral of St. Joseph, Wheeling

By Father Ben Daghir, a priest of the Diocese of Erie, Pa.

Recently, Fr. Luke Daghir, Fr. Brandon Feikles, and I traveled to Wheeling, West Virginia, to attend the Saint Paul Center's annual priest conference. This year's conference, The Psalms: Praying from the Heart of God's Word, provided several days of prayer, study, and fraternity with brother priests from 38 states and 4 countries.

Before the conference officially began, we decided to make our first stop not at the conference center, but at the Mother Church of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston: the Cathedral of St. Joseph. We wanted to begin our time together with a Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament. Looking back, I cannot imagine a better way to begin.

Constructed in 1924 and dedicated in 1926, this magnificent Lombard Romanesque cathedral rises nearly 150 feet above the crossing and was intentionally designed to proclaim the Catholic faith through architecture, sacred art, sculpture, stained glass, and Scripture. It quickly became apparent that almost every stone, image, inscription, and proportion within the cathedral had been thoughtfully chosen. Nothing was merely decorative. Everything was intended to teach.

As the three of us slowly walked through the Cathedral, I found myself thinking that we should make a point of visiting cathedrals more often. They are certainly historical landmarks and architectural treasures, but they are much more than that. They are places where the Church hands on the faith through beauty. Long before a priest ascends the ambo or a choir begins to sing, the building itself has already begun proclaiming the Gospel.

As we enter the Cathedral, our eyes are naturally drawn forward and upward. The soaring arches gently lift our gaze toward heaven, reminding us that every liturgy is ultimately directed toward God. Sacred architecture accomplishes something our modern world rarely encourages: it teaches us to slow down, to contemplate, and to recognize that we have entered a place where heaven and earth mysteriously meet. Even before we have spoken a prayer, the building has already begun shaping our hearts.

It is fitting that the tour begins at the baptismal font. Before we approach the altar, before we receive the Eucharist, before we speak of Christian discipleship, we remember where our life in Christ began. The marble font, resting beneath its beautifully crafted bronze cover, recalls the waters of Genesis, the crossing of the Red Sea, the Jordan River, and above all the living water flowing from Christ Himself. Baptism is not simply one event among many; it is the doorway into every other sacrament and the foundation of the Christian life. Beginning the tour here quietly reminds us that every saint first entered the Church through these saving waters.

Courtesy photo

Father Brandon Feikles and Father Luke Daghir spend quiet time at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling.

From there, the Cathedral unfolds almost like a visual pilgrimage. The stained-glass windows illuminate the life of Christ while drawing our attention to the remarkable unity of Sacred Scripture. Throughout the Cathedral we encounter biblical typology: the Old Testament constantly preparing for and pointing toward its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Scenes from salvation history are not presented as isolated moments but as one continuous story of God's covenant with His people. The windows invite us to read the Bible the way the Church has always read it—with Christ at its center.

One of the most striking themes woven throughout the Cathedral is the relationship between justice and mercy.

Towering above the sanctuary is Christ, not merely as the Good Shepherd or the Suffering Servant, but as the glorious Judge of heaven and earth. Above Him, beautiful stained glass depicts the virtue of justice, reminding us that every human life ultimately stands before the judgment seat of Christ. Yet this justice is

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Cathedral...

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never presented apart from mercy.

Directly beneath Christ's image stands the altar, where the sacrifice of Calvary becomes sacramentally present. The Judge is also the Lamb who was slain. Justice and mercy are not opposing realities; they embrace one another in the mystery of the Cross.

That theological vision continues throughout the sanctuary. The Eucharist occupies the very center of the Cathedral's life. The imagery surrounding the altar beautifully illustrates what the Church has always believed: the Bread of Angels is given for the life of the world. The Lamb pours forth His mercy through the chalice of salvation.

The Eucharist becomes the place where divine justice is fulfilled and divine mercy is generously bestowed upon sinners. Standing there before the Blessed Sacrament, it became clear that every artistic element ultimately directs our attention to Christ truly present in the Eucharist.

As we continued walking, we found ourselves surrounded by apostles, evangelists, confessors, virgins, martyrs, and countless saints whose lives continue to point beyond themselves toward Christ. We are reminded that we never worship alone. Every Mass unites the Church on earth with the Church in heaven.

Surrounded by this "great cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1), we begin to appreciate that the communion of saints is not merely a doctrine we profess; it is a living reality into which we are invited every time we gather for worship.

Eventually, almost without realizing it, our attention was drawn upward into the magnificent blue dome. Here the Cathedral reveals one of its most profound theological insights. Angels surround the divine Name of God. Seraphim and cherubim fill the heavens with praise.

The four living creatures described in the Book of Revelation appear around the dome while biblical inscriptions proclaim the eternal worship offered before the throne of God. Standing beneath that vast ceiling, we begin to appreciate something the Church has always taught: the Sacred Liturgy is not merely our prayer rising toward God. Through Christ, we are drawn into the worship that heaven has offered from all eternity. Every Mass is infinitely greater than what our eyes alone can perceive.

Towering above the altar is the magnificent mosaic of Christ enthroned in glory. His arms are extended in welcome. Around Him stand the Blessed Virgin Mary, the apostles, saints, angels, and the countless multitude described in the Book of Revelation. Behind Him radiates a brilliant field of gold, reminding us that Christ is the Light no darkness can overcome. Every line of the Cathedral quietly directs our attention toward Him.

One inscription, taken from Revelation 5, overlooks the sanctuary:

"The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction."

Those words overlook the altar where, at every Mass, the sacrifice of Calvary is made sacramentally present. The artwork is not illustrating a distant event. Rather, it reveals the deeper reality of what is taking place before us. The heavenly liturgy depicted throughout the Cathedral is united with the earthly liturgy celebrated at the altar. We are not spectators observing sacred mysteries from a distance; we are participants in the worship of the Risen Lord.

Courtesy photo illustration

Shown above are some of the stained glass windows in the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling.

As beautiful as the sanctuary is, another feature quietly remained with me as we prepared to leave: the great rose window of the Cathedral.

I have always loved rose windows, and this one seemed especially significant because it is encountered as we depart. That placement feels deeply symbolic. After entering God's house, hearing His Word, receiving His mercy, and being nourished by the Eucharist, we leave with one final image before us: perfect order.

At the center stands Christ. Everything else radiates from Him and out into the world. "Go in peace" we hear at the end of Mass. It's a challenge to go out into the world with order: truth, goodness, and beauty. It's a challenge to go out into the world with the Gospel.

Perhaps that is one of the Cathedral's greatest lessons. The Christian life is rightly ordered only when Christ remains at its center. Our families, friendships, work, hopes, sufferings, dreams, and responsibilities all find their proper place only when they are arranged around Him. The rose window becomes a beautiful image of the well-ordered Christian soul that goes out into the world to share the Gospel.

Perhaps what impressed me most was the remarkable unity of the Cathedral. The architecture, mosaics, stained glass, marble, sculpture, inscriptions, music of the great pipe organ, and even the patterns beneath our feet all work together in harmony. Nothing distracts from Christ. Everything serves the liturgy. The building itself becomes a teacher, forming our imagination, educating our minds, and gently lifting our hearts toward God. In an age when words often dominate our communication, this Cathedral reminds us that quiet beauty also boldly proclaims the Gospel.

There is an important lesson here for all of us. We live in an age of constant movement and endless distraction. We rush from one responsibility to another, often forgetting to pause before the mysteries of God. Cathedrals gently resist that pace. They invite us not merely to look but to behold, not merely to admire beauty but to allow beauty to draw us toward Truth.

Sacred art is never an end in itself; it exists to reveal Christ more clearly and to prepare our hearts for worship. Here theology is not confined to books or classrooms. It is carved in stone, illuminated in stained glass, painted in brilliant color, and proclaimed through every architectural line that directs our gaze toward heaven.

Perhaps we should make it a habit to visit cathedrals whenever we travel. Whether they are found in our own diocese or hundreds of miles from home, they are places of pilgrimage as much as places of architecture. We can walk slowly, read the inscriptions, contemplate the sacred art, pray before the Blessed Sacrament, and allow the building itself to preach before anyone steps into the pulpit. Such visits remind us that our Catholic faith has always engaged the whole person—mind, body, imagination, and soul.

Courtesy photo

Father Luke Daghir, Father Brandon Feikles, and Father Ben Daghir at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling.

Pope Calls for End to West Bank Violence, Pursuit of Two-State Solution

By Junno Arocho Esteves

(OSV News) — Warning against increased violence in the West Bank, Pope Leo XIV urged world leaders to decisively pursue an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel.

"I renew my appeal for an end to the ongoing violence against the Palestinian civilian population in the West Bank, and I urgently call on the international community to work toward advancing the two-state solution, for a just and lasting peace," the pope said Aug. 16 after praying the Angelus with pilgrims gathered outside the papal residence in Castel Gandolfo.

The pope's appeal came amid reports of violent attacks by Israeli settlers, including in Taybeh, one of the last remaining Christian villages in the West Bank.

According to a report by Reuters, Israel's military closed access to Taybeh from non-residents due to attacks on Palestinians by Israeli settlers.

Although Israel said the military's presence was to protect Palestinian residents, a U.N. inquiry released in June accused the country's armed forces of enabling settler violence in the West Bank.

Israeli authorities, the report stated, "have consistently acknowledged settler violence as a problem, while promoting structural conditions that enable it," including settlement expansions, infrastructure, protection of settlers and reinforcing "the widespread impunity for attacks."

In an interview with Vatican News published Aug. 10, Father Bashar Fawadleh, parish priest of Christ the Redeemer Church in Taybeh, said the continued violence by settlers was "a deliberate strategy of harassment designed to create a climate of fear and pressure Palestinian families into leaving their land."

Lamenting that Christians in Taybeh "feel forgotten," Father Fawadleh urged Catholics to "speak out about the situation here" and "to talk about these Christian brothers and sisters who are living in terror."

The priest urged Pope Leo "to intervene for this last Christian village in the West Bank, so that these settler attacks cease and the occupation of our land stops. We simply want to live in peace, with justice and dignity."

Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, visited Taybeh Aug. 15 and celebrated Mass on the Feast of the Assumption at Christ the Redeemer Church, where he reassured the Catholic Church's commitment to the village.

"We will continue to do everything within our power to preserve the ecclesial presence here, at every level throughout the Holy Land," Cardinal Pizzaballa said.

The cardinal encouraged Christians to learn from Mary and to not to fall into despair "because this situation can contaminate our hearts."

"But we want to remain a community that gives birth to life, without giving up or abandoning our rights, our right to life. So be courageous. Do not be afraid," he said.

Pope Leo's call for a two-state solution echoed the appeal he made to members of the Vatican diplomatic corps early this year.

"The Holy See is especially attentive to any diplomatic initiative that seeks to guarantee to the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip a future of lasting peace and justice in their own land, as well as to the entire Palestinian people and the entire Israeli people," the pope said Jan. 9.

"In particular, the two-state solution remains the institutional perspective for meeting the legitimate aspirations for both peoples; yet sadly, there has been an increase in violence in the West Bank against the Palestinian civilian population, which has the right to live in peace in its own land," he said.

(Junno Arocho Esteves is an international correspondent for OSV News.)

Keyser's Assumption Parish Launches New Faith Formation Program

KEYSER—Just as a healthy tree continues to grow throughout every season of its life, our faith is meant to grow throughout every stage of ours. At Assumption Parish, faith formation is not just for children or for those looking to join the Church—it's a lifelong journey.

This fall, we are excited to introduce Growing Together in Christ, our parish's new faith formation program.

While our CCD and OCIA programs will continue helping our youngest members and our newest members learn and grow in their Catholic faith, we are expanding opportunities for adults.

We will be offering both adult faith formation classes and a Bible Study program, providing opportunities for parishioners of all ages and at all stages of their faith to deepen their relationship with Christ and grow in their understanding of Scripture and the teachings of the Church.

Whether you are a child preparing for the sacraments, a parent hoping to strengthen your faith, or someone who simply wants to learn more about God's Word, there is a place for you.

We invite everyone in our parish family to consider joining us as we continue Growing Together in Christ!

We will continue to share information about all of these opportunities in the coming weeks. If you have questions about any of the programs, please contact Nancy Starcher (304-813-0313). If you are interested in the Adult Faith Formation or Bible Study classes, you can contact Donna Ellis (540-303-1492).

Series Will Look at Mary's Unique Role in God's Kingdom and in the Lives of the Faithful

STONEWOOD—A Bible Study coming this fall at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Stonewood is "Mary: A Biblical Walk with the Blessed Mother."

Parish officials said the eight-part series reveals Mary's unique role in God's Kingdom and in the lives of the faithful. See what life was like for Mary and experience what she felt at each dramatic moment of her story recorded in Scripture. See the significance of Mary as you explore the Biblical roots of Catholic belief about her. Sessions will be on Tuesday (12:30 p.m.) or Wednesday (5:30 p.m.) starting Sept. 1 through the end of October.

Contact Deacon John Yaquinta or the parish office at (304) 623-2334 to register. Books for parishioners is $10 and for non-parishioners, $25.

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Cultivating a Relationship With Mary

CNS photo/Lola Gomez

A statue of Mary in the Garden of the Little Madonna is seen in the Pontifical Gardens in Castel Gandolfo, Italy, Sept. 2, 2025.

By Colleen Pressprich, OSV News

Our family has a beautiful vegetable garden, one that I spend a great deal of time in during the summer months. Our raised beds are bursting with life and flavor. My mother has a green thumb, and I learned early on in life that gardens are the work of years, not months, and that gardening is work to be done in all seasons.

In the fall and winter, we gather and turn the compost. In March, we plant the seedlings. April and May, we amend the soil, replacing the nutrients last year's crops used up. In June, the plants are in the beds, being watered and pruned, and carefully watched for bugs. Here in Michigan, it isn't until late July or early August that we see most of the fruits of our labors. The tomatoes ripen, the peppers grow big, the pumpkins and corn are just beginning to mature. But the work doesn't stop then — the plants still need care.

Tend the garden faithfully, and it will grow.

The same is true of my family's devotion to the Blessed Mother. Just as the gardener walks the beds each day, plucking a small weed here, trimming a sucker there, small acts, done often and completed with love, have borne great fruit in our lives.

Developing a relationship with Mary changed my faith life. I would not be the woman I am today without her influence. When I became a mom myself, I knew that I wanted the same for my children. Not being raised in a practicing Catholic family, there were many times I felt like I was muddling through. Just as I've become a better gardener in the past decade, I've learned a lot about what it means to cultivate a family devotion to Mary.

Here are my garden lessons about growing a devotion to the Blessed Mother.

Learn from the experts

Most bookstores have an entire section on gardening. Walk into any Catholic bookstore, and you'll find a section on Mary.

Why? Because learning from the experts is valuable. It's true about gardening, and true about Mary.

Books can be a valuable resource, not just for learning, but for deepening prayer lives as well. If you don't know where to begin, think about what drew you to Mary in the first place. What fascinates you, intrigues you, makes you uncomfortable? (Yes, that last one matters — growth often comes when we are uncomfortable.)

If you have kids, what questions do they have? What do you want them to know, to understand about who Mary is and how she loves them?

Then, find the resource that will help you answer them. So many of our great saints have written about Our Lady. Their works can edify and encourage you as you get to know her.

Catholic books like "When Mary Says Yes," "Take it to the Queen" and "Go and Fear Nothing," as well as my own two Marian-themed books, are regular bedtime reads in our home. The kids enjoy them, and they help lay the groundwork for strong relationships with Mary for our children.

Don't compare your brand new garden to your neighbor's that has been growing for 20 years

Today our vegetable garden grows enough produce for our family's table each summer. But it wasn't always that way.

The first year we were in our house, my husband built two raised beds for vegetables. The next year, two more. Then we added a grape arbor. Then raspberry bushes. Slowly and steadily we built. We tested different compost ratios. We trialed combinations of plants. We learned from our mistakes.

It's so tempting to look at the families around us, and instead of being encouraged, become despondent that we aren't as faithful, devoted or prayerful. If you're just starting a relationship with Mary, resist the temptation to compare yourself to others. No garden reaches maturity in a single season and no relationship does either.

It's wonderful if there are families in your community who have strong ties to Our Lady. It's worth looking to them for inspiration, but always remember that you are working different ground than they are. A Marian devotion is not

See "Mary" on Page 12

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Mary ...

Cont'd from Page 11

one size fits all, and you'll have to figure out what works (and doesn't work) in your own home and life.

Weave her into the fabric of your day: The Church has a prayer for that

Any busy parent knows that the key to forming a successful habit is routine and repetition. Weaving Mary into our family's daily life has been a crucial element of cultivating a devotion to her in our home. In addition to sprinkling our read-alouds with faith-based books, we try to do the same with prayer. The Hail Mary is our go-to prayer most of the time.

Employ visual cues and reminders

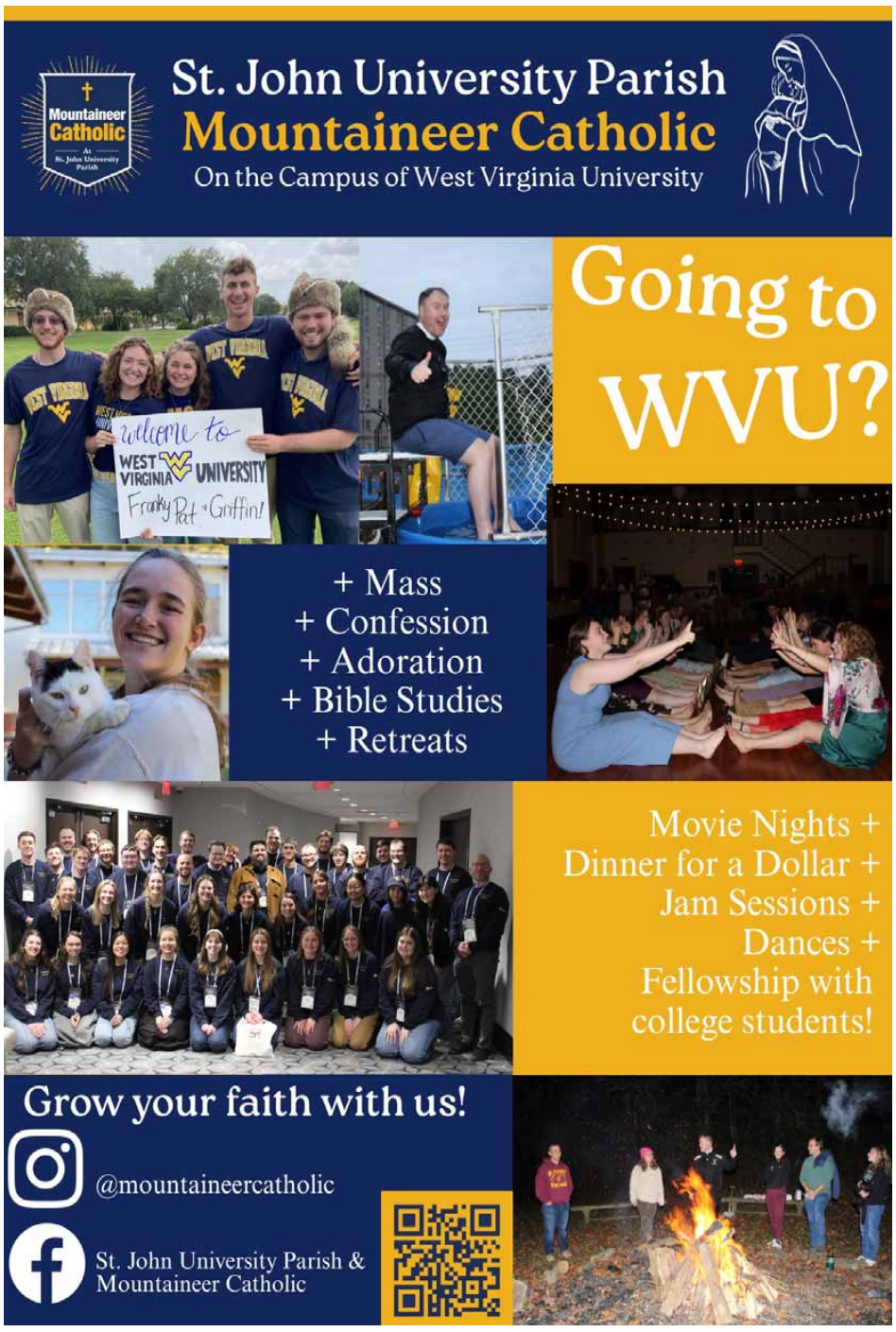
There are days when the schedule gets busy, and I forget to water the vegetables. But I can't walk past the beds and see the leaves wilting and the parched dirt without remembering to get the hose.

The same is true for prayer in the home. One of the most impactful things I ever did for our family's prayer life was also the easiest. I filled our home with Catholic art. Children are concrete learners. They notice details in the art that spark conversations and open doors to prayer. The art in our home also serves as a visual cue for me — it reminds me to pray for them and with them.

Embrace the long view

As you begin to cultivate your family's devotion to Mary, I have one last piece of advice for you, and that is to embrace the long view. There will be seasons of dryness, seasons of struggle, of wiggly rosaries, grouchy children and too-full schedules. Remember that not every vegetable ripens at the same time. Don't be discouraged if your garden of devotion takes time to grow.

(Colleen Pressprich is a homeschooling mom of five and the author of 10 books for Catholic children, families and adults, including two about Mary: "Marian Consecration for Families with Young Children" and "OSV Kids Discover: Mary.")



IMMERSED IN LIVING WATER

A Season of Creation Concert

Join us as we gather in this faith-filled concert celebrating the Season of Creation. We praise God's gift of creation and the life-giving waters that sustain all life. Through music and reflection, we give thanks for God's gift of water, renew our connection to creation, and deepen our commitment to caring for our common home.
All are welcome.

Date: September 21st, 2026
Time: 6:30 p.m.
Location: Mount St. Joseph Chapel
Cost: Free Will Offering

All Saints Choir is under the direction of Stephen Pishner. Stephen is a 1990 Graduate of WV Wesleyan, with a Bachelors in Music Education with an emphasis in Pipe Organ. He is the Director of Music and Liturgy in Bridgeport, WV and is a published composer with G. I. A. Publications. Stephen is a singer, keyboardist, composer and emerging recording artist and is best defined as an eclectic energetic musician. He also has a band called AMICI, that plays Classic Popular Top 40 music, as well as Country Music, Standards and Italian music. He can be heard on their most recent recording AMICI "Rockin' the Streets".

Chad Carter, a Wheeling native. Graduated summa cum laude from Wheeling Jesuit University in 1999 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History; in 2001, he graduated from WJU with a Masters in Business Administration.
In 2009, he became Chancellor of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. Since 1993, Chad has worked at various parishes as music director and organist.

Reserve your spot today:
Contact Anna Marie Troiani
Phone: 304-907-0171
Email: atroiani@csjoseph.org

The Secret Lives of Butterflies

Speaker Heather Tokas, the founder of West Virginia Monarch Butterfly Day (Sept.12th) is an award-winning international speaker and entrepreneur. She is the first and only butterfly farmer in West Virginia. Born in Wheeling, graduate of Bethany College in social work, Heather is also the founder of metaStone: a healing group located in Wellsburg, WV.

September 8, 2026
6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p. m.
St. Joseph Retreat Center
Wheeling, WV
Cost: $15

Did you know butterflies have personalities? Yes! Even the caterpillars do quirky things.

Butterflies are no exception when it comes to having preferences and particular interests.

Heather Tokas will present a slide show of interesting photos encompassing the entire life cycle of butterflies while talking about her experiential wisdom gained over the last 50 years.

If you have photos of caterpillars, butterflies, or moths that you need identified, bring them and Heather will most likely be able to do that for you.

Butterfly life cycle kits will be available for sale so you may enjoy a personal experience at home.

Reserve your spot today!
Contact Anna Marie Troiani at 304-907-0171
or email at: atroiani@csjoseph.org

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Papa León: María, asunta en la gloria del cielo, es signo de esperanza, consuelo para el mundo

Foto de OSV News/Bob Roller)
En 2017, se puede ver una estatua de la Virgen María y el Niño Jesús en la iglesia de San Rafael Arcángel en Quebradillas, Puerto Rico.

Por Junno Arocho Esteves

(OSV News) — Para quienes viven en medio de la guerra, el desplazamiento y desastres naturales devastadores, la Virgen María sigue siendo una fuente de esperanza y consuelo maternal, dijo el Papa León XIV.

Tras rezar el Ángelus en la solemnidad de la Asunción, el 15 de agosto, el Papa invocó la intercesión de María "maternal en nombre de aquellas comunidades que necesitan ser consoladas y seguir teniendo esperanza".

"Pienso en los hermanos y hermanas de Tierra Santa, que es también, por excelencia, la Tierra de María", dijo el Papa a los peregrinos reunidos frente a la residencia papal en Castel Gandolfo. Esa mañana, el pontífice había celebrado la Misa de la Solemnidad de la Asunción de la Bienaventurada Virgen María en la parroquia pontificia de Santo Tomás de Villanueva.

La oración del Papa por la paz en Tierra Santa llega en un momento de incertidumbre, después de que el primer ministro israelí, Benjamin Netanyahu, rechazara la retirada de Israel de Gaza, que formaba parte de un plan negociado por el Consejo de Paz del presidente de Estados Unidos, Donald Trump.

A pesar del alto el fuego anunciado en octubre de 2025, Israel ha seguido lanzando ataques aéreos que, según afirma, tienen como objetivo desmantelar a Hamás.

El Papa León también ofreció oraciones por los pueblos de Ucrania y Rusia, "ambos unidos por una devoción filial a la Santa Madre de Dios", y por los cristianos que sufren discriminación o incluso persecución.

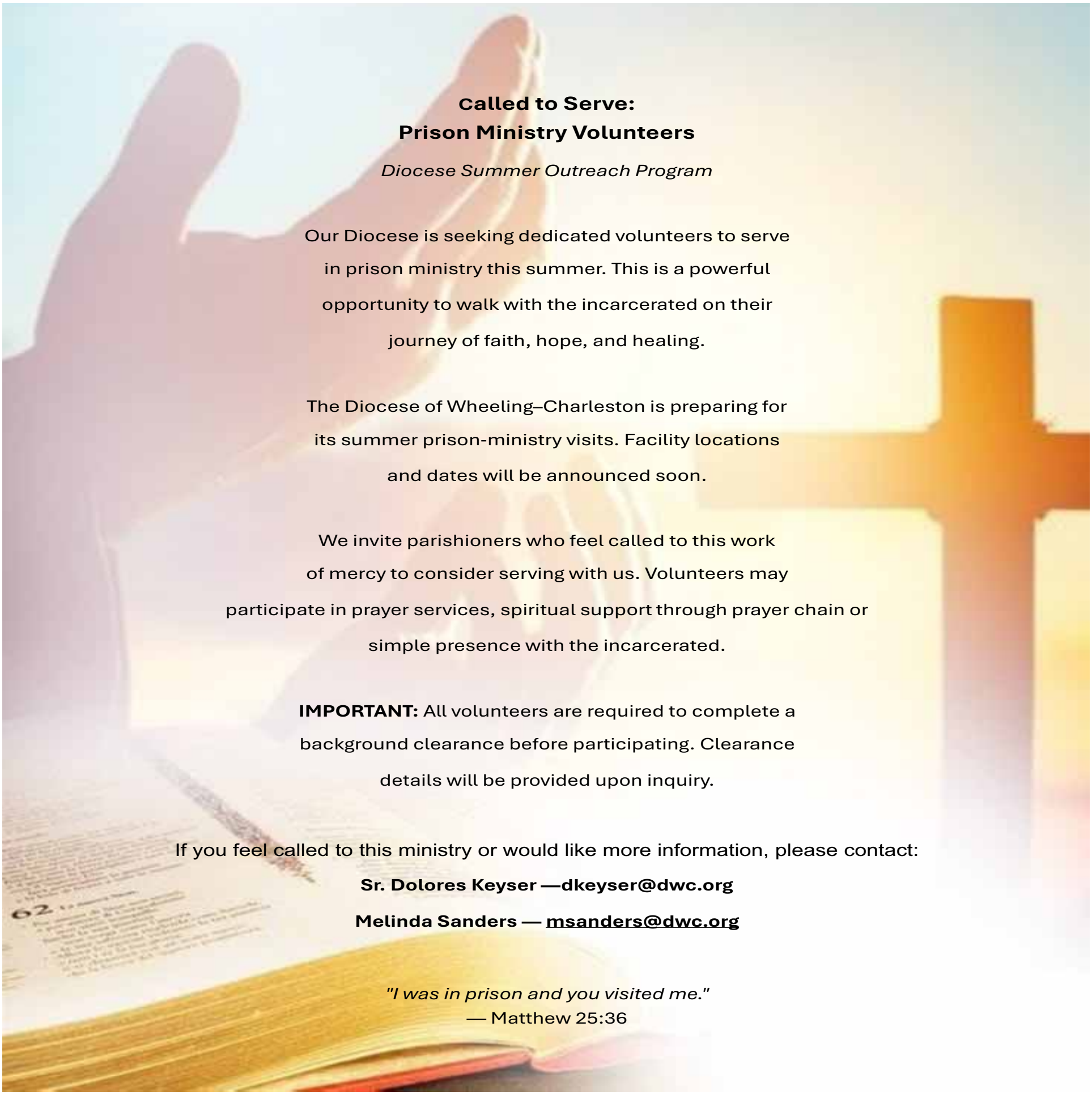
La oración del Papa por Ucrania y Rusia se hizo eco de un llamado similar a la paz que había realizado durante su discurso del Ángelus del domingo 9 de agosto, en el que lamentó la muerte de civiles inocentes, incluidos niños.

Antes de saludar a los fieles reunidos frente a su residencia, el Papa León dijo que seguía "por la población colombiana que sufre a causa del terremoto", mientras continúan los esfuerzos de recuperación tras el devastador sismo de magnitud 7,4 que sacudió el país el 10 de agosto.

"Me uno a estas comunidades y a todas aquellas que viven en contextos difíciles, y junto con ellas exclamo: '¡Santa María, ruega por nosotros!'", dijo el Papa.

(Junno Arocho Esteves es corresponsal internacional de OSV News.)

Para denunciar presuntos casos de abuso sexual de menores: La diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston te exhorta a denunciar cualquier delito ante las autoridades civiles. Para realizar una denuncia en contra de cualquier obispo en todos los Estado Unidos, favor de reportarlo en la página web www.repostbishopabuse.org. Y si, además, existen motivos para creer que un obispo ha cometido alguna conducta sexual inapropiada favor de comunicarse con las autoridades civiles de la jurisdicción correspondiente y también puede realizar un reporte en la página web antes mencionada. **Para informar a las autoridades civiles:** comuníquese con la policía local; los números varían según su ubicación. Si considera que alguien está en peligro inmediato, favor de llamar al 911. Para informar de forma confidencial sobre cualquier sospecha de abuso o negligencia infantil, incluido el abuso sexual, favor de comunicarse con la Oficina de Servicios de Protección Infantil de Niños y Familias de West Virginia, llamando a la línea directa de abuso infantil al 1-800.352.6513. **Para informar a las autoridades diocesanas:** La diócesis exhorta a informar primeramente a las autoridades civiles correspondientes, cuando la denuncia incluye un delito, y también alienta a informar a las autoridades eclesiásticas correspondientes. Para reportar casos sospechosos de abuso sexual de menores por parte del personal de la Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston, comuníquese directamente con la diócesis a los teléfonos 1.888.434.6237 o 304.233.0880 para hablar con cualquiera de las siguientes personas asignadas: Sr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Sr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; y si desea hablar en español con Sor Martha Gómez, ext. 264. También puede llamar a la Oficina de Ambiente Seguro de la diócesis al 304.230.1504 o a la línea directa de abuso sexual de la diócesis al 833.230.5656. Los formularios de quejas están disponibles en línea en la página web www.dwc.org, favor de hacer clic en "Diócesis" en la barra de menú, luego en "Oficinas", en "Ambiente seguro" y en "Descargar archivos y formularios". El formulario se titula "Formulario de queja para denuncias de abuso sexual de menores". El formulario se puede enviar por correo en Estados Unidos a: Office of Safe Environment, Diocesis of Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003. **Para informar al Coordinador de Asistencia a Víctimas de la Diócesis:** Favor de llamar a Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, al 304.559.6742. Además de las vías mencionadas anteriormente para denunciar el abuso sexual, la diócesis se ha asociado con la compañía Navex Global que ofrecer la plataforma EthicsPoint para informar cualquier inquietud adicional, como sospecha de mala conducta financiera, profesional y personal de un sacerdote, diacono, religioso, o empleado laico de la diócesis o cualquier parroquia o escuela católica en West Virginia. Puede acceder a la plataforma EthicsPoint a través de la página web www.dwc.org, en "Rendición de cuentas", luego "Informar mala conducta" o llamando al 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint es una herramienta de denuncia confidencial y anónima, ellos se encargarán de transmitir su denuncia directamente a las autoridades civiles y a las autoridades diocesanas correspondientes, y lo más importante al denunciar a través de ellos, la identidad de la persona que denuncia está protegida. **Enlaces e información:** Departamento de Salud y Recursos Humanos de WV: https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp. Policía Estatal de Virginia Occidental, Unidad de crímenes contra a menores: 304-293-6400.



Called to Serve:
Prison Ministry Volunteers

Diocese Summer Outreach Program

Our Diocese is seeking dedicated volunteers to serve in prison ministry this summer. This is a powerful opportunity to walk with the incarcerated on their journey of faith, hope, and healing.

The Diocese of Wheeling–Charleston is preparing for its summer prison-ministry visits. Facility locations and dates will be announced soon.

We invite parishioners who feel called to this work of mercy to consider serving with us. Volunteers may participate in prayer services, spiritual support through prayer chain or simple presence with the incarcerated.

IMPORTANT: All volunteers are required to complete a background clearance before participating. Clearance details will be provided upon inquiry.

If you feel called to this ministry or would like more information, please contact:

Sr. Dolores Keyser —dkeyser@dwc.org

Melinda Sanders — msanders@dwc.org

"I was in prison and you visited me."
— Matthew 25:36

Wheeling University DPT Students Partner with United Way to Help Local Agencies

Courtesy photo

Wheeling University Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) students volunteer at Catholic Charities Neighborhood Center in Wheeling.

Courtesy photo

A DPT student volunteers with kids at the Weirton Christian Center.

WHEELING — Wheeling University Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) partnered with the United Way of the Upper Ohio Valley to provide DPT students with regional service-learning opportunities around the area.

The students helped four local agencies with various projects and gained greater insights into the health care needs of Appalachia residents. During their four days of service, the DPT students learned about and assisted four non-profit organizations: Catholic Charities Neighborhood Center; Family Services of the Upper Ohio Valley, the Weirton (WV) Christian Center; and the Seeing Hand Association.

"Wheeling University students did a variety of tasks at each of the partner agencies," said Maddi Seavy, associate director of the United Way of the Upper Ohio Valley. "The students learned more about the unique needs within our communities, and the many ways local organizations contribute to health, wellness, and quality of life. We were especially grateful for the opportunity to introduce the students to United Way, connect them with our community partners, and help demonstrate how collaboration and service can create a lasting impact throughout the Upper Ohio Valley."

According to Dr. Rhonda Haley, Director of Clinical Education and Clinical Associate Professor, service learning is incorporated into the curriculum throughout the program. "The regional service-learning course provides an opportunity for the DPT students to observe, understand and serve the needs of people living in Appalachia. Working with our local non-profit agencies allowed our DPT students to learn about the specialized services available to the individuals in the Upper Ohio Valley. Throughout the week, the DPT students were able to use their skills to make a difference in the community, sometimes in ways they did not anticipate."

DPT student Corbin Westfall, who is a native of the Ohio Valley, said he and his classmates understand the importance of making a difference beyond the classroom and the clinic. He noted they did tasks that weren't necessarily a priority but were vital to their operation.

Westfall said, "This experience taught me personally that I can use my skills and what I have learned to improve the health of individuals in the local community. Going forward I will value this experience and the lessons it taught me and use these to educate others and continue to lend a helping hand in any way I can."

Dr. Hugo Andreini, Assistant Professor of Physical Therapy, noted the program is stressful and intense, but each of the students find the 'drive' to impact others in the local area.

"We don't just teach the students to give back to the underserved, but to give all the energy they can. This service they did, where likely only God is watching, allows our students to give the very best of themselves to others," Andreini added.

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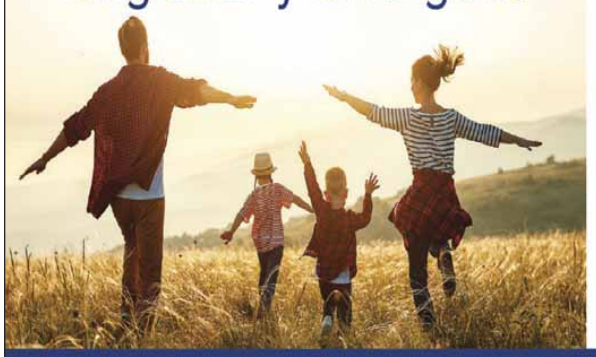

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